

CONTROVERSIAL.

"THE AGITATION OF THOUGHT IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM."

The Editors reserve the right to erase all improper personalities and objectionable expressions found in any article accepted for this department; and they alone shall be the judges.

Original Wheat.

BY J. W. BEER.

To C. H. Balsbaugh :

If my carefulness of the feelings of those whom I criticize exceeds my love of truth, I neither desire nor know it to be so. Feelings are tender things, and should be cautiously handled; but truth is sacred and immutable, and must be honored and held inviolable. Feelings may be wounded for their improvement—cauterized for their health; but truth may not be disregarded to advocate its claims, extend its domain, or to make it effective. By the love and defense of the truth, I have wounded the feelings of many who were dear to me, and have "suffered the loss of all things, and consider them as vile refuse, so that I may win Christ" and honor him. In the defense of truth, I have suffered the anathemas of ecclesiasticism from my brethren, my kindred in Christ; all of which I might have avoided by dishonoring truth and bowing at the shrine of an unsanctified and unholy policy to please the feelings of those in power. Truth, precious truth, let me love and honor it more and more. Thy word, O Lord, is truth—"the Original Wheat"—and by it alone are we sanctified and saved.

You ask, "What is 'the original wheat' to which you refer?" My meaning floats on the surface, so that a child can gather it. Those who are accustomed to diving instead of swimming, may not be able to catch it. "Wheat" means truth; and "the original" means the first in order, or that with which we commenced. I first set forth the truth in relation to "The Church and its Officers." Bro. Roberts in his "Review" said something concerning "essentials," that called forth Dr. Miller's "Siftings," and this brought out your "Siftings Sifted." But as neither you nor Dr. Miller referred to the truth contained in my article, "the original wheat" was lost. Only this, and nothing more.

I am fully aware of your "hobby," "the Incarnation," and it is a good one; but the best hobby in the world may be ridden to death. Yours is still alive and may it ever live; but I think I have known it to groan under burthens that might with much propriety, have been laid on Balaam's steed, which, "speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet." It is true, that the Incarnate accomplished our redemption and made our salvation and glorification possible; but to make Incarnation "the original wheat," and the "pivot fact in the economy of God by which every thing is determined," is making too much to turn on it. There are facts "in the economy of God" that underlie the great fact of the Incarnation itself, reducing it to an essential means for the accomplishment of a pre-determined end. The "original wheat"—the primal and pivotal fact,—by which everything in the economy of God is determined, is laid in the purpose of God, "who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." The Incarnation is no more a "pivot fact" than the baptism of the Holy Ghost. To say that everything in the economy of God must be interpreted in harmony with the Incarnation, is uttering a profound truth; but that does not make it the pivot fact in the economy of God by which everything must be determined, for the Incarnation itself must be interpreted in harmony with the most insignificant fact in the economy of God. The Incarnation is only one of many connate and co-ordinate facts in the great scheme of man's redemption and salvation; and to give it a higher place than this would be to deify and worship the fact instead of the Incarnate. The fact of the Incarnation is an insolvable mystery to us; but the teachings and example of the Incarnate are plain and practicable. It was necessary for God to live in man to teach man how to live in God, and to raise man from that which is fleshly and temporal to that which is spiritual and eternal. The fall of man made the Incarnation a necessity; the constitution of man made the Incarnation possible, and the nature of man made the Incarnation desirable; but the whole sublime superstructure, including man in God's image, man fallen, the God-man, man redeemed, and man glorified, is suspended upon "the counsel of God." The Incarnation and the Incarnate were both subject to that "counsel of God." The Holy Spirit in all his operations, gifts and callings, is subject to this "counsel of God." And so must the redeemed, in order to be glorified, be subject to this same immutable "counsel of God." This counsel of God" is revealed in the Gospel of Christ,—not in the written word, but in the word that is written,—and "is the power of God unto

salvation to every one that believeth," Jew or Greek. To neglect what is written, and to attempt to formulate a code of morals and religion from our vague and often erroneous conceptions of the great fact of the Incarnation, would border on insanity and popery. This would hopelessly exclude nine hundred and ninety-nine one-thousandths of the human race from the possibility of salvation, or suspend their salvation on an arbitrary submission to the speculations of a fallible man. We can no more evolve the texture or style of a Christian's coat or head-dress, from the Incarnation, than we can the essential mode and form of Christian baptism, or the size and form of the letters in which the word of God is printed.

Your intimation that I was laboring under a misapprehension when I referred to your "circuitous way of reiterating what brother Roberts said," is kindly received, but my mind is not changed. I have no way of knowing what you mean, except by what you write; and the thoughts attributed to you are clearly and forcibly conveyed by your own language. I am not fond of language which is so enigmatical, that, if read in the light of Webster and Brown, it means one thing, and if read in the light of the Incarnation, as seen by the writer, means something else.

In conclusion, I want to say that, on the whole, I have been greatly edified by your pen ministration. Sometimes I am delighted by it; but occasionally you exhibit idiosyncrasies that are both amusing and sad. Your letter in No. 1, breathes a spirit of kindness which I gratefully acknowledge; and I hope that we may ever retain that brotherly kindness, which is characteristic of God's children, and that will bring us nearer to each other and to God.—Lathrop, Cal.

Convention Analyzed.

BY D. A. LICHTY.

Shall it be a convention and for what purpose? If so, shall it be ministerial or lay representation. Sectional or ecumenical? These are vital questions which appeal directly and urgently to the consideration of every zealous worker in the Lord's vineyard.

The first proposition is readily answered. Just as soon as it is fairly understood that a system of co-operative missionary work is being introduced, which shall unquestionably bear the impress of practicability, effectiveness, simplicity and economy. Any system governed by these wholesome qualifications insures success; and any expedition or corporation deficient in any one of these essential features, presupposes failure and disaster.

The second proposition is readily answered. Shall it be a ministerial convention? The idea of a ministerial faculty's competency of inventing and formulating a system of co-operative mission labor, or any other enterprise, based as this necessarily must be, upon the finance of the church—is simply preposterous. I have a very humble opinion of ministerial ability in financial affairs. Ministerial labor and finance are as antipodal as China and North America. Never submit to the arbitrament of ministers of the Gospel in cases where property is involved. The ministry is part of the church and subject to the church. The proposed convention is a church measure and ministers are but servants of the church. The Apostles would not be hampered by the secular affairs of the church, not as much as stoop down to pick up the proceeds of individual estates laid at their feet; but appointed, out of the laity, men of capacity and judgment over the affairs of the church, so they might consecrate themselves wholly to the ministry of the word.

Now as to its character, whether local or general—here is where the issue is joined. This is the pivotal question upon which hangs the destiny of the mission under contemplation. Annual Meeting has, for years, experimented on this question without any credit to herself or any benefit to those whom she meant to serve, while local measures generally prospered and survive to this day. I am satisfied from general observation, that the smaller the mission the more certainty of success. "Larger ships may venture more; but little boats should keep near shore." A general convention whether ministerial or lay representation, presupposes a general corporation of both spiritual and material resources of the brotherhood at large, and I strongly incline to the belief that there is not enough money nor enough talent in the church to

justify the undertaking. Yet the great heart of the church, from Dan to Beersheba, throbs unisonantly and sympathetically for a more general effort for the extension of Zion's borders, and, it is hoped, also for a higher plane of Christian excellence at home, therefore she moves in this direction.

To recapitulate: We want a convention because the cause demands it. We want a more efficient way of reaching isolated members and of planting the Christian standard outside of organized districts. Yes, we want at least twenty conventions in so many different parts of the brotherhood, held at the earliest practicable opportunity, and we want each territory separate and independent of each other as touching plans and methods, of missionary work.

To predicate our calculations on a business basis: who ever heard of the failure of a peanut stand? But of large corporations our ears scarcely cease ringing, with the doleful sound of failure upon failure. May we hope a word to the wise is sufficient.

There is now a call for a sectional convention on foot, embracing Lawrence, Wolf River, Pony Creek, and Falls City. The most salient feature in this corporation doubtless is to reduce mission work to a more practical, effectual and economical system. The territory is large enough, with its environments, for all practical purposes. Has the reader got my idea? Here it is—Be careful and do not undertake more than what you can comprehend and control. Remember the sad dilemma of the little boy who drew the elephant in a lottery; he did not know what to do with him.

Moral.—A large missionary enterprise means a big elephant on our hands.

Now, remember, a convention means a corporation, a corporation means an organization, an organization means a mission board, and this mission board superintends and controls the mission work, and upon this mission board depends the success of the enterprise.

Conscience.

BY E. MASON.

Conscience is not a teacher of God's law. Neither is it a faculty given to us by God to enable us to know what is right and wrong. Conscience is not always a safe guide as to the path of duty. A knowledge of God's law comes to us by revelation and not by conscience. There are some faculties that naturally belong to man. God seems to have implanted in the human heart certain great principles. For instance there is the knowledge of a superior being and a desire to worship that being. If man does not know the true God, he will naturally manufacture a God out of his own imagination and worship it. Then there is the great principle of honesty. Before a man can conscientiously and deliberately injure his fellowman without provocation by physical torture or robbery or abuse, and maliciously injure those who have done them good, they must be educated to it. This is not naturally in the human heart. The true definition of honesty is only obtained through revelation. God has revealed himself and his law in his Word. Those who have the light of the Bible are to look to that for a knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. Moreover there is not a man on the face of the whole earth who has not before him, by tradition, at least, if not in written word, some vestige of God's revelation to his ancestors.

What we call "conscience" is a monitor, rather than a teacher. It is that faculty or attribute of man which tells him that he ought to do right, although it does not tell him what right is. Again, it reminds him that he has done wrong, when he purposely has done that which he supposed was wrong, or has failed to do that which he understood to be his duty. Hence it is true when a man acts against his conscience he is at fault, because as far as he knows he does wrong, and his intention has been to be wrong. But, on the other hand, if a man does what his conscience approves, it does not follow that he is doing right. It is your duty to know what is right, and then to do what is right. You may think you are all right, and you are all wrong. "Take heed that the light which is in thee be not darkness." The word of God, and not conscience, is the repository of God's truth. Beware lest you be wrong conscientiously.